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For Immediate Release  
September 26, 2002  
Richmond, Virginia

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**NEWS RELEASE**

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Donald W. Thompson, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richmond Division, announce the sentencing today of Nancy Walker Thomas, age 63, of Emporia, Virginia, before United States District Judge Richard L. Williams. Thomas was sentenced to a term of 60 months for her involvement in a crack conspiracy that ran from 1998 until the case was indicted by a federal grand jury in December 2001. Three of her children and her nephew have already been sentenced. Thomas was initially facing a minimum sentence of ten years; however, because of her age and failing health, Judge Williams reduced her sentence.

During the conspiracy, Thomas allowed her residence in Emporia to be used by family members and other drug dealers to store and distribute crack cocaine. This case was one of the first "Community Impact" cases prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia. The "Community Impact" initiative was designed by U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty to direct federal resources to communities with the greatest need for federal intervention. Federal agencies work with the local authorities to target a particular drug organization and expeditiously secure a federal indictment. Once the targets are in federal custody, local law enforcement officers are in a better position to police their respective communities and maintain a status quo of public safety.

This case was investigated by the FBI, the Emporia Police Department and the Greensville Sheriff's Office, and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Laura C. Marshall.